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THE HIGH SCHOOL PROBLEM*

By A. H. FLOWERS

"Democracy has come, and on education Democracy hangs."

THE above statement was made by John Galsworthy, in *Scribner's Magazine*, August, 1919, (page 188).

If, then, democracy is to survive, the institution on which it depends must survive and prosper. Our schools must function in a larger sense than they have in the past. Upon whose shoulders rests the responsibility of attending to this larger functioning of the high school? We have to answer, "Upon the teacher." The teacher alone, by the selection and instruction of subordinate teachers, by careful selection of curricula, by correct and careful presentation of subject matter, can do much in the way of raising the general taste, conduct, and learning of our coming American citizens. The teacher must give the starting push towards "greater dignity with simplicity" in our life. The teacher can instill into the body politic the understanding that education is not a means toward wealth as such, or toward learning as such, but toward the broader ends of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

The first necessity for improvement in our modern life is that our teachers should have the "wide view" and be provided with the means and the curricula which make it possible to apply this broadening vision to their pupils.

We must realize that our old system of coddling and cramming the pupils with traditional idealism alone will not make these pupils free-thinking citizens of a democracy. We must so arrange our teaching methods as to develop initiative, self-reliance, self-control in our youth.

To be sure we do not want to get wholly away from traditions. We want to keep fresh all that fine idealism and all those democratic ideas of our ancestors that helped to make a free and liberty-loving people. What we must do, however, is to see these traditions in their true perspective and not as unrelated and disconnected parts of a skeleton past.

The teacher's duty and privilege is to teach boys and girls how to live those ideals in their every-day life, when there is no war to stir them to patriotic deeds and sacrifices, to teach them to live the life of patriotism in times of peace.

We must teach our pupils to think in clear lines, and not in the hazy, uncertain manner that results

from our present system of cramming enough lore down the throats of the pupils to make them pass certain superficial tests that we call examinations. The effect produced on the mind in this cramming process is a haze of uncertainty that inhibits initiative. It produces lethargic thinking and a consequent tangled idealism.

We must prevent a divorce of thought from life. We can and must relate the subjects of the curriculum to the every day needs of the pupil, and of the community. We must show the pupils that ideals are worthless if they are thought of as something fine to think about but not worth living. We must try to make every pupil an embodiment of the American spirit, like the late ex-President Roosevelt, who was truly the personification of America,—wide awake, alert and always ready to defend a chosen position, but at the same time with a broad and comprehensive sympathy, a love for the truth and a full recognition of the right of another to have his own opinion.

The task of the teacher in the secondary school cannot be stated in academic terms, in figures of mathematics or in laws of science. If the structure of democracy is built upon the foundation of an intelligent, broad-minded and self-controlling populace, take heed ye builders of the foundation stones and build not therein wood, hay, stubble, for your work shall be revealed so as by fire.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON MATHEMATICAL REQUIREMENTS

THE National Committee on Mathematical Requirements held a meeting at Lake Delavan, Wisconsin, early in September when a number of reports were discussed and adopted. A report on The Revision of College Entrance Requirements received the greatest amount of discussion. It is hoped that this report may be released for publication shortly. It includes a general discussion of the present problems connected with college entrance requirements in mathematics, a report of an investigation recently made by the National Committee concerning the value of the various topics in elementary algebra as preparation for the elementary college courses in other subjects, and a suggested revision of the definitions of entrance units in elementary algebra and plane geometry. In connection with the suggested requirements in plane geometry a list of fundamental propositions and constructions is attached. This list includes the proposition which may be assumed without proof or given informal treatment, a list of the most fundamental theorems and constructions from which it is

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intended that questions on entrance examination papers other than originals be chosen, and a list of subsidiary theorems. It is proposed to prepare a mimeographed edition of this list of propositions and constructions at the earliest possible moment for the benefit of such teachers as may desire to make use of it in connection with their classes during the coming year. A copy will be sent to any person interested upon application to the Chairman of the Committee (J. W. Young, Hanover, New Hampshire).

A preliminary draft on Mathematics in Experimental Schools was discussed at this meeting. Mr. Ralph Schorling of the Committee has spent over a year collecting material for this report, which will be ready for publication early next spring. It will be extensive and will describe in detail the work actually done in mathematics in experimental schools throughout the country.

Miss Vevia Blair of the Committee presented her report on the Present Status of Disciplinary Values in Education. It is expected that this report will be released for publication in October. It gives a critical review of the complete literature concerning the experimental work on the transfer of training as well as an evaluation of this literature terminating in the formulation of certain propositions concerning disciplinary values which appear justified by the experimental work. A particularly valuable feature of the report would seem to lie in the fact that a large majority of the most prominent psychologists in the country appear to be ready to subscribe to the propositions formulated.

A subcommittee under the chairmanship of Professor C. N. Moore is preparing a report on "Elective Courses in Mathematics in Secondary Schools." A committee under the chairmanship of Professor David Eugene Smith is preparing a report on "The Standardization of Terminology and Symbolism" and Professor R. C. Archibald is preparing one on "The Training of Teachers." It is expected that all three of these reports will be presented for the consideration of the National Committee in October.

The work of the National Committee and its recommendations were discussed in teachers' classes at the summer school sessions of colleges, universities and normal schools throughout the country. Present indications point to the fact that the work of the National Committee will have a prominent place on the programs of most teachers' organizations throughout the country during the coming year. The National

Committee stands ready as before to help in every possible way in the preparation of such programs and will be glad to furnish material for discussion.

THE STATE UNIVERSITY AND RURAL SCHOOLS

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pective needs of the community to be served. Some institutions would do more, others less, than that suggested here. In most States the need is particularly urgent for trained county superintendents, supervisors of rural schools, principals of rural consolidated schools, and public welfare officers for rural communities. For in the duties required of these workers are the strategic points of rural education. And the success of their work depends on leadership, on training, and on vision.

The success of the instructional work in the departments of rural education depends on several factors. Adequate and sound courses are of importance. These must be thorough and foundational. Scholarship must be encouraged by precept and example. Faddists and fads should be discouraged and dismissed in matters so urgent as that of training leaders for rural service. In such enterprises there is no place for soft pedagogy or peripatetic professors-at-large who, sophist-like, talk with equal facility on either side of any question. Teachers in departments of rural education should be chosen for their sound learning and practical experience and first-hand knowledge of their work, rather than because they have run the stupid race for theory and the doctorate. Such teachers need also a wholesome and sympathetic attitude towards rural life and all its puzzling difficulties and conditions. Broad sympathy rather than a critical attitude is needed. Without these qualities teachers can not inspire confidence and respect of students, the administration, or the other departments of the university, or of the school workers of the State. And without this confidence the purpose of this work will be promptly defeated.

Sound scholarship, leadership, and competent instruction are as essential for those who train rural school workers as for those who train chemists, historians, or engineers. Moreover, these qualities are necessary if there is to be induced and cultivated in the university itself that attitude which is now so much needed for the encouragement of interest in rural life. Generally speaking, schools of education and professors of education have not been cordially received by other departments and other interests in